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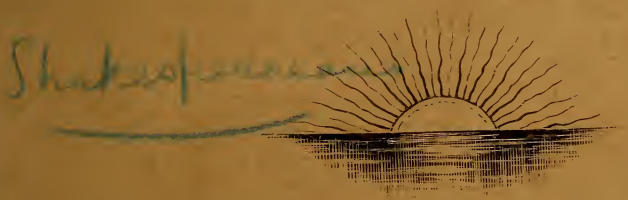
CHRISTIAN PARADOXES

The Characters of a Believing Christian, in Paradoxes, and Seeming Contradictions.

BY

FRANCIS BACON,
(LORD VERULAM.)



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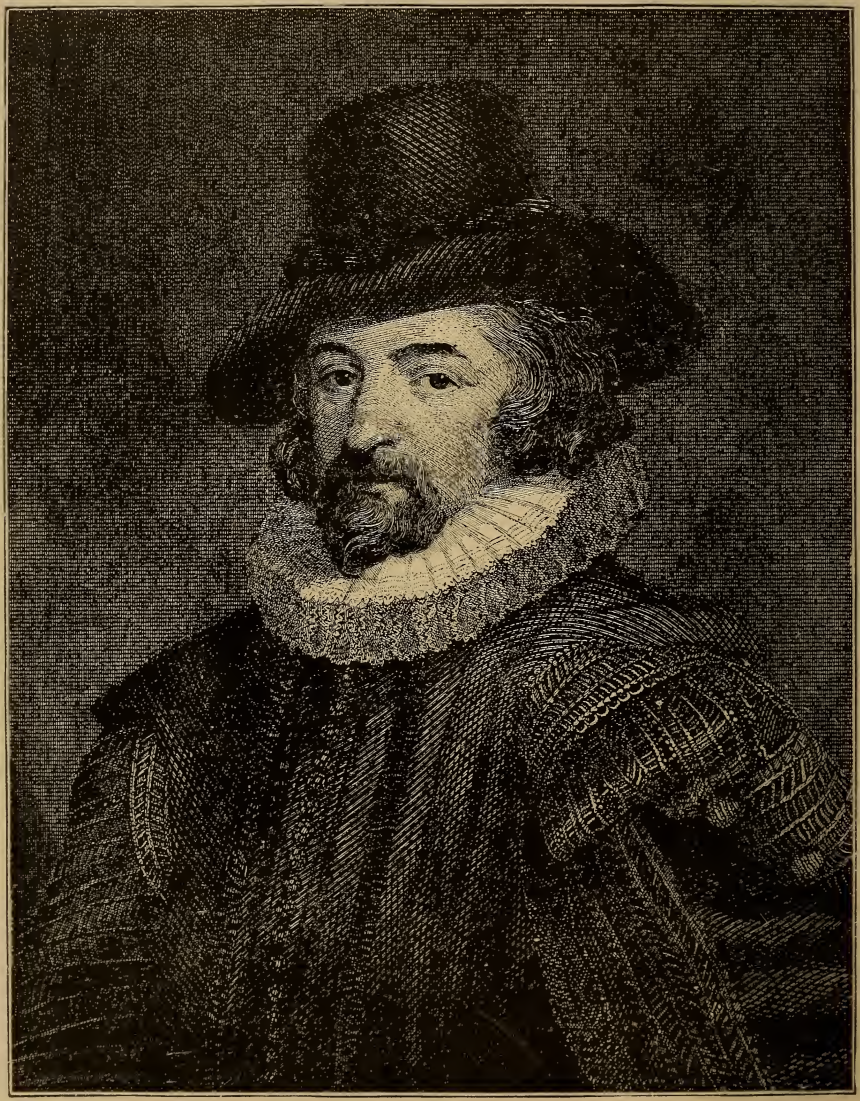

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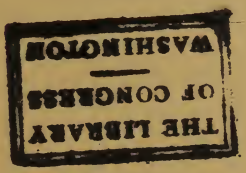
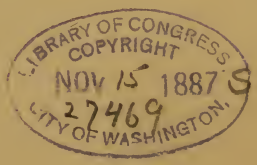
Christian Paradoxes:

THE CHARACTERS OF A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN, IN PARADOXES, AND SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS.

BY
FRANCIS BACON,
(LORD VERULAM.)

"READ NOT TO CONTRADICT NOR TO BELIEVE, BUT TO WEIGH AND CONSIDER."—*Bacon.*





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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

MANY books and pamphlets have been published, and many discussions have taken place between learned writers and critics, since the time when Horace Walpole, in *Historic Doubts*, first questioned the genuineness of Shakespeare's claim to the authorship of the plays that bear his name; and as much interest has recently been excited in the public mind by the alleged discovery of a certain cipher, which also claims for Francis Bacon the authorship of the works now credited to William Shakespeare, it is believed that the publication of a typical extract from the acknowledged writings of Bacon may prove acceptable and timely, and may enable the reader to judge, by comparison of style and expression, whether this claim for the Baconian cipher rests upon a reasonable foundation, and whether it is worthy of serious consideration.

For this purpose a selection has been made from Bacon's works of an article entitled *The Characters of a Believing Christian, in Paradoxes and Seeming Contradictions.* This selection is believed to be the most curious, suggestive, and characteristic of Bacon's voluminous productions. It has been copied from a carefully printed and reliable edition of Bacon's works, published by William Black, in Paternoster Row, London, in the year 1837.

But while this selection may enable the reader to judge intelligently whether Bacon's style resembles the dramatic writings of Shakespeare, it will probably leave him in doubt as to what views Bacon really entertained on religious subjects. His *Translation of Certain Psalms into English Verse*, his *Prayers*, and his *Confession of Faith*, would imply that he was an orthodox disciple of the Anglican church; while, on the other hand, the first of his aphorisms in the *Novum Organum* states that "Man, the servant and interpreter of nature, can only understand and act in proportion as he observes, or contemplates, the order of nature; more he can neither know nor do." This aphorism—the fundamental principle of the inductive philosophy—reads like the skeptical reasoning of David Hume in his *Essays and Dialogues*, or of the Baron D'Holbach in the *System of Nature;* and *The Christian Paradoxes and Seeming Contradictions*, herewith published, can scarcely be excelled in aptness of arrangement, clearness of statement, and subtlety of suggestion, by that eminent advocate and orator, Robert G. Ingersoll. Indeed, these *Paradoxes and Contradictions* seem to suggest or to embody nearly all the criticisms advanced on this subject by skeptical writers, from Bayle to Strauss, from Voltaire to Feuerbach, from Gibbon to Taylor, and from Paine to Renan.

These contradictory writings of Bacon in reference to the Christian belief cannot be satisfactorily explained or reconciled; and as it seems impossible that a sincere believer could have expressed the doubts these *Paradoxes* imply, it appears reasonable to think that Bacon was of those who believe that religion should be taught in a symbolical and mystical language, that the initiated and learned few may *understand* and the great multitude *believe;* and, also, that its true meaning should be veiled and hidden in paradoxes

and parables, "that seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand."

Alexander Pope, after penning that bitter couplet upon Bacon, which has passed into a proverb:

"The greatest, brightest, meanest of mankind!"

says that "Lord Bacon was the greatest genius that England, or perhaps any other country, has ever produced." This praise may be considered as excessive, and this censure as cruelly unjust. That Bacon was guilty of taking bribes is proved by his own confession and by the sentence of his compeers. He was condemned to pay a fine of £40,000, and to be imprisoned during the king's pleasure. His imprisonment, however, lasted but two days, and his fine was almost immediately remitted. He was not charged with laxity in morals, and Montagu has ably defended his legal and judicial character. "His judgments," says Carte, "were found too just to be reversed," and no decree of his was ever set aside on the ground of bribery and corruption. "They who so loudly blame Bacon," says Lord Brougham, "overlook the meanness of all the great statesmen of those courtly times." But in Bacon's first political pamphlet, entitled *Certain Observations upon a Libel*, he attempted to vindicate the unjust persecution, by the English government, of catholics, dissenters, and puritans; and thus, by his ill-advised advocacy of ecclesiastical tyranny, proved himself an enemy of religious liberty.

A sect called Independents, whom Bacon in his pamphlet calls Brownists, had arisen in England, and were the first teachers of civil equality and of religious freedom; and they also had the honor of first asserting, in the Elizabethan age, the sacred rights of conscience. This sect maintained that churches should not be dependent on the State, and they

conducted religious exercises in a manner different from that prescribed by State authority. For this offence, two of their leaders, Barrow and Greenwood, were arrested and tried in 1593, and although avowing loyalty to the queen, and submission to the civil government, were condemned to death, and were led from their cells in Newgate to the place of execution. With the resignation of martyrs they then prepared for death, when a reprieve arrived from Queen Elizabeth. "On the morning, however, of the following day," says Vaughan, "these deluded victims were secretly conveyed to the place of slaughter, and were there put to death." This judicial assassination occurred while Francis Bacon was "counsel extraordinary," and in his pamphlet he sneers at these Brownists that "are now, thanks be to God, by the good remedies that have been used, suppressed and worn out; as there is scarce any news of them."

Persecution and cruelty never yet convinced a disbeliever nor permanently suppressed the liberty of thought; and penal laws did not prevent that great rebellion and religious war which afterwards, under Oliver Cromwell, deluged England in blood. And it is to be regretted that Francis Bacon, whom D'Alembert calls "the greatest, the most universal, and the most eloquent of philosophers," did not fully realize this great truth. He afterwards, it is true, urged more reasonable measures than the "good remedies" which destroyed Barrow and Greenwood, yet it seems certain, that, like the puritans, the papists, and the established church of England, he never dreamed of religious toleration, and had not the remotest conception of the sacred principles of religious liberty.

PETER ECKLER.

New York, Oct. 21, 1887.

CHRISTIAN PARADOXES.

1. A CHRISTIAN is one that believes things his reason cannot comprehend : he hopes for things which neither he nor any man alive ever saw : he labors for that which he knoweth he shall never obtain : yet in the issue, his belief appears not to be false ; his hope makes him not ashamed ; his labor is not in vain.

2. He believes three to be one, and one to be three ; a father not to be elder than his son ; a son to be equal with his father ; and one proceeding from both to be equal with both : he believing three persons in one nature, and two natures in one person.

3. He believes a virgin to be the mother of a son ; and that very son of hers to be her maker. He believes him to have been shut up in a narrow room, whom heaven and earth could not contain. He believes him to have been born in time, who was and is from everlasting. He believes him to have been a

weak child, carried in arms, who is the Almighty ; and him once to have died, who only hath life and immortality in himself.

4. He believes the God of all grace to have been angry with one that hath never offended him ; and that God, that hates sin, to be reconciled to himself, though sinning continually, and never making, or being able to make him satisfaction. He believes a most just God to have punished a most just person, and to have justified himself through a most ungodly sinner. He believes himself freely pardoned, and yet a sufficient satisfaction was made for him.

5. He believes himself to be precious in God's sight, and yet loathes himself in his own. He dares not justify himself even in those things wherein he can find no fault with himself, and yet believes God accepts him in those services wherein he is able to find many faults.

6. He praises God for his justice, and yet fears him for his mercy. He is so ashamed as that he dares not open his mouth before God ; and yet he comes with boldness to God, and asks him any thing he needs. He is so humble as to acknowledge himself to deserve nothing but evil ; and yet believes that God means him all good. He is one that fears always, yet is as bold as a lion. He is often sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; many times complaining, yet always giving of thanks. He is the most lowly-

minded, yet the greatest aspirer ; most contented, yet ever craving.

7. He bears a lofty spirit in a mean condition ; when he is ablest, he thinks meanest of himself. He is rich in poverty, and poor in the midst of riches. He believes all the world to be his, yet he dares take nothing without special leave from God. He covenants with God for nothing, yet looks for a great reward. He loseth his life, and gains by it ; and whilst he loseth it, he saveth it.

8. He lives not to himself, yet of all others he is most wise for himself. He denieth himself often, yet no man loveth himself so well as he. He is most reproached, yet most honored. He hath most afflictions, and most comforts.

9. The more injury his enemies do him, the more advantages he gains by them. The more he forsakes worldly things, the more he enjoys them.

10. He is the most temperate of all men, yet fares most deliciously ; he lends and gives most freely, yet he is the greatest usurer ; he is meek toward all men, yet inexorable by men. He is the best child, husband, brother, friend ; yet hates father and mother, brother and sister. He loves all men as himself, yet hates some men with a perfect hatred.

11. He desires to have more grace than any man hath in the world, yet is truly sorrowful when he

seeth any man have less than himself ; he knoweth no man after the flesh, yet gives all men their due respects : he knoweth if he please man he cannot be the servant of Christ ; yet for Christ's sake he pleaseth all men in all things. He is a peacemaker, yet is a continual fighter, and is an irreconcilable enemy.

12. He believes him to be worse than an infidel that provides not for his family, yet himself lives and dies without care. He accounts all his superiors, yet stands stiffly upon authority. He is severe to his children, because he loveth them ; and by being favorable unto his enemy, he revengeth himself upon him.

13. He believes the angels to be more excellent creatures than himself, and yet accounts them his servants. He believes that he receives many good things by their means, and yet he neither prays for their assistance, nor offers them thanks, which he doth not disdain to do to the meanest christian.

14. He believes himself to be a king, how mean soever he be : and how great soever he be, yet he thinks himself not too good to be a servant to the poorest saint.

15. He is often in prison, yet always at liberty ; a freeman, though a servant. He loves not honor amongst men, yet highly prizeth a good name.

16. He believes that God hath bidden every man that doth him good to do so ; he yet of any man is

the most thankful to them that do aught for him. He would lay down his life to save the soul of his enemy, yet will not adventure upon one sin to save the life of him who saved his.

17. He swears to his own hinderance, and changeth not; yet knoweth that his oath cannot tie him to sin.

18. He believes Christ to have no need of any thing he doth, yet maketh account that he doth relieve Christ in all his acts of charity. He knoweth he can do nothing of himself, yet labors to work out his own salvation. He professeth he can do nothing, yet as truly professeth he can do all things: he knoweth that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet believeth he shall go to heaven both body and soul.

19. He trembles at God's word, yet counts it sweeter to him than honey and the honey-comb, and dearer than thousands of gold and silver.

20. He believes that God will never damn him, and yet fears God for being able to cast him into hell. He knoweth he shall not be saved by, nor for, his good works, yet he doth all the good works he can.

21. He knoweth God's providence is in all things, yet is so diligent in his calling and business, as if he were to cut out the thread of his happiness. He believes beforehand that God hath purposed what he

shall be, and that nothing can make him to alter his purpose; yet prays and endeavors, as if he would force God to save him for ever.

22. He prays and labors for that which he is confident God means to give; and the more assured he is, the more earnest he prays, for that he knows he shall never obtain, and yet gives not over. He prays and labors for that which he knows he shall be no less happy without; he prays with all his heart not to be led into temptation, yet rejoiceth when he is fallen into it; he believes his prayers are heard, even when they are denied, and gives thanks for that, which he prays against.

23. He hath within him both flesh and spirit, yet he is not a double-minded man; he is often led captive by the law of sin, yet it never gets dominion over him; he cannot sin, yet he can do nothing without sin. He doth nothing against his will, yet maintains he doth what he would not. He wavers and doubteth, yet obtains.

24. He is often tossed and shaken, yet is as mount Sion; he is a serpent and a dove; a lamb and a lion; a reed and a cedar. He is sometimes so troubled, that he thinks nothing to be true in religion; yet if he did think so, he could not at all be troubled. He thinks sometimes that God hath no mercy for him, yet resolves to die in the pursuit of it. He believes, like Abraham, against hope, and though he cannot

answer God's logic, yet, with the woman of Canaan, he hopes to prevail with the rhetoric of importunity.

25. He wrestles, and yet prevails ; and though yielding himself unworthy of the least blessing he enjoys, yet, Jacob-like, he will not let him go without a new blessing. He sometimes thinks himself to have no grace at all, and yet how poor and afflicted soever he be besides, he would not change conditions with the most prosperous man under heaven, that is a manifest worldling.

26. He thinks sometimes that the ordinances of God do him no good, yet he would rather part with his life than be deprived of them.

27. He was born dead ; yet so that it had been murder for any to have taken his life away. After he began to live, he was ever dying.

28. And though he hath an eternal life begun in him, yet he makes account he hath a death to pass through.

29. He counts self-murder a heinous sin, yet is ever busied in crucifying the flesh, and in putting to death his earthly members : not doubting but there will come a time of glory, when he shall be esteemed precious in the sight of the great God of heaven and earth, appearing with boldness at his throne, and asking any thing he needs ; being endued with humility, by acknowledging his great crimes and

offences, and that he deserveth nothing but severe punishment.

30. He believes his soul and body shall be as full of glory as them that have more; and no more full than theirs that have less.

31. He lives invisible to those that see him, and those that know him best do but guess at him; yet those many times judge more truly of him than he doth of himself.

32. The world will sometimes account him a saint, when God accounteth him a hypocrite; and afterwards, when the world branded him for a hypocrite, then God owned him for a saint.

33. His death makes not an end of him. His soul which was put into his body, is not to be perfected without his body; yet his soul is more happy when it is separated from his body, than when it was joined unto it: and his body, though torn in pieces, burnt to ashes, ground to powder, turned to rottenness, shall be no loser.

34. His Advocate, his Surety shall be his Judge; his mortal part shall become immortal; and what was sown in corruption and defilement shall be raised in incorruption and glory; and a finite creature shall possess an infinite happiness. Glory be to God.

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